1: Nimuendajú E-5 (1929-1936) 1946 SOS Timbira SOS

837 virgins; the group further comprises all divorcées and widows who do not as soon
562 as possible enter another fixed union. Irrespective of those who were formerly
554 wantons and subsequently became permanently married, Ponto has twelve to fifteen members of this class. They are not regarded as outcasts nor is their mode of life condemned as vicious. They arouse public displeasure only if they lure men away from their wives, and even then the man is held solely responsible. Privately and publicly the wantons are on a footing of equality in their relations with virgins and married women; they are simply not models and have certainly failed to live up to the ideal.

It took me considerable time to determine the identity of the wantons, for their behavior is devoid of impudence or boldness, even in talking with the bachelors of the tribe. To them, too, the Timbira principle applies that a man is helpless against a woman's aversion, so that there is no question of any coercion or of a wanton's obligation to yield to a man coveting her. On the contrary, they choose their lovers and, what is more, mostly in an extraordinarily discreet manner. Usually the wanton gets her brother to ask the young man she favors to bring her a piece of some game animal or something of the sort. If he consents, he immediately suggests through the intermediary a rendezvous at a specified spot in the steppe or the woods at a certain time. Thither he takes his gift and receives his reward.

837 Most of the wantons soon establish so permanent a relationship with their lovers
585 as to create the impression of ceremonially wedded wives as soon as the man sleeps in her matrilineal home. Indeed, especially after the birth of children, they come to be regarded as such. So far as I was able to observe, this is even the most frequent form of union nowadays. Only a small minority fully exercise their right to take up with any man they wish. Such happenings as Von den Steinen describes for the Bororo[88] are not possible among the Timbira.

The lovers supply their mistresses in the manner stated with gifts, especially victuals, but also with other objects. If the present is such as to be unsuitable for the girl, she will turn it over to her brother, who is usually cognizant of her amours and figures as her natural protector and counselor.

[848] A pregnant wanton names all the men with whom she has had sexual relations during pregnancy, thus enabling them all to go into seclusion in the infant's interests (p. 107).

834 At present not a single wanton pays the least attention to moiety exogamy. My
837 impression is that it was these wantons who first transgressed the rule and that people came to regard union with one of these girls as the normal form of matrimony.

DESIRE FOR CHILDREN

762 The more children parents have, the better they like it. Since there is sex equality
842 neither boys nor girls are preferred. In 1936 six girls happened to be born one after the other, a circumstance that attracted general attention, but no unfavorable comment.

586 A man would leave the wife he had married as a virgin provided she proved
842 barren. I do not know how far this was a mere pretext, for I know two childless couples who have not the least intention of separating for that reason.

782 In order to effect conception a woman breaks the egg of some bird, preferably that of a *Tinamus* species, and rubs the yolk on her body. Others invoke the sun: Smearing urucú on the palms of their hands, they go outside the village in the morning, raise their hands toward the rising sun and pray: "kedti! iymãiykra ño,

[88] Von den Steinen, Naturvölkern, 388 f.

1; Nimuendajú 8-6 (1929-1936) 1946 SCS Timbira SCS

wakukrá iykapeáne." That is, approximately: "Grandfather! Give me a child so that I may be able to eat with him." Then the suppliant spreads the urucú on the inside of her thighs.

Kentapí did not take that much trouble. One morning she was sitting at home against the wall, eating some food from a gourd bowl, while the sun was shining in at the door, directly in front of her feet. She set down her bowl, stretched out both palms horizontally toward the sun, like a begging child, and without getting up said in a low tone: "pa'pám! iymã iykra ṅoṅgõ! pa'pám iykaprẽ', marwa'té iykrĩ napá. Ka, iykaprẽne iymã iykrareṅoṅgõ, vamẽ iypa!" ("Our Father! Give me a child! Our Father, take pity on me, I am sitting here alone, eating. You, pity me, give me a child to eat with me!") On my request she subsequently repeated the words. "I wonder whether he will listen to your prayer!" I asked. "Surely," she answered, "look at Iromkré [Kentapí's younger sister], she also invoked him and is already pregnant." However, it was three years before Kentapí's prayer was fulfilled.

It is a striking fact that the girls of this tribe never have children before, and only several years after, marriage. This is regarded as normal by the Indians themselves, and the above-mentioned Iromkré, who conceived immediately after marriage, was considered exceptional. She was fifteen as a primipara, and her mother told me that she was really too young to bear children. Abortives, if used at all, are exceptional; nor, in my opinion, can the means employed to prevent menstruation be responsible for the lateness of pregnancy in the light of the earliness of sexual intercourse. For this purpose a girl will seat herself on a steppe tree the Neobrazilians call pau pombo (*Tapirira* sp.?) or drink the infusion of the scraped bark of pau candeia (*Cassia* sp.), which is also considered an abortive.

In any case Snethlage probably underestimates the age of mothers in setting that of Ramkõ'kamekra girls who already had a child at barely twelve;[88] or, possibly the child he had in mind was not the offspring of the girl with her. The youngest mother I saw was certainly Iromkré, whose age was between fourteen and fifteen.

OLD AGE

Old people are esteemed; a junior would not venture to address them by name as though they were of his own age, but will always apply a kinship term, calling them kedti or tụ'ire (grandparent) even if there is no blood relationship. Children and young people never try to converse with their elders unsolicited; even when they have to make some communication to them, they usually remain standing before them in silence until asked to speak. In meeting old people on a narrow path, the younger ones make way to let them pass. I have never heard the frailty of old age derided or mocked. Old Krithị', though already hard of hearing and very myopic, would insist on occasionally going to the creek five to six kilometers beyond the village to try his luck as an angler. On these trips he went astray several times on the numerous trails crisscrossing the steppe and was unable to find his way home. Then his grandsons or great-nephews trotted in his wake like hunting-dogs and jubilantly led him back by the hand.

I have pointed out (p. 94) that after a period of some forty years of athletic life all men of an age class ceremonially and automatically drop out of the sports activities to enter the council, which constitutes the real governing body of the tribe since the chiefs undertake nothing without their advice. Further, I have explained by many illustrations that after any ceremonial retreat a person must present himself to this assemblage before being reckoned a full-fledged member of society again.

[88] Snethlage, Reise, 463.